



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## JOSEPH DESLER COSTA SOFT POWERS

April 15 – May 29, 2021

Artist reception:  
Saturday, April 17, 2021  
2:00 – 7:00 p.m.

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ClampArt is pleased to present Joseph Desler Costa's exhibition "Soft Powers," the artist's second solo show at the gallery, and his fourth in New York City.

Soft Power is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than coerce by force. Popular media, algorithms, and advertising campaigns subtly shape human desire through appeal and attraction, leading the public to adopt and consume culture, taste, and values over time.

As a political concept and strategy, soft power reached its peak in the 1980s and 1990s during the Cold War. The United States, having less successfully exerted its authority through military might, found new ways to influence behavior through sugary branding and corporate messaging driven by Coca-Cola, Hollywood, and other vehicles of consumer culture. In his series "Soft Powers," Costa uses the language and symbols of advertising and propaganda from those two decades to understand and reflect on the power of persuasion.

Costa combines multiple exposures, appropriation, and laser-cut, layered prints, creating art objects that look almost mass-produced or machine-made—as if fresh off the assembly line. He often re-photographs his own images and incorporates them into new pieces to further drive this feeling of sterile reproduction. These new works resemble pastel, lusty-hued product photography and often incorporate recognizable logos, graphics, and even album art laser-cut into aluminum print surfaces.

The 1980s also saw New Wave emerge as a successor to the iconoclastic, abrasive, and political aspects of punk rock. New Order's 1983 album, "Power, Corruption and Lies," as well as their 1987 album, "Substance," are New Wave classics that turn away from punk conflict and embrace bubble-gum, eyes-closed dance floor strategies to turn inward and away. Like his works that mirror the subtle dynamism of corporate branding, Costa creates images that specifically reference these two pivotal post-punk albums and the genre's ability to soften the delivery of a heavy blow.



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“Soft Powers” uses late 1980s and early 1990s aesthetics and political structures as symbols that reflect today’s fractured and divided world where credibility and truth are hard to come by. Facts and fiction are difficult to distinguish in news and social media as they endlessly circulate on our desktops and handheld devices. The stories we decide to accept and adopt are often shaped by images created with ulterior motives—super sweet surfaces that hide the manipulation. “Soft Powers” attempts to fold that subtlety in on itself, using its own methods and aesthetics to reveal inescapable contradictions while critiquing from within.

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Joseph Desler Costa currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He holds a degree from ICP-Bard College (MFA) and attended the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV) in Cuba. His works have been exhibited nationally and internationally. Costa’s photographic works are included in the permanent collections of the Leonard Lauder Collection, the Cleveland Clinic Art Collection, BNY Mellon Collection, the Bidwell Collection, and the collection of the International Center of Photography. Costa has curated and organized a number of exhibitions, books,

and zines, and in 2014 Costa founded the imprint Silent Face Projects. Costa is a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts and The International Center of Photography, both in New York City.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Principal, or see [www.clampart.com](http://www.clampart.com). Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Image 1: © Joseph Desler Costa, “Prrrrince,” 2021, Layered laser cut dye sublimation prints on aluminum (Edition of 3 + 2 APs), 32 x 24 inches.

Image 2: © Joseph Desler Costa, “Power Division Corruption Joy Lies Fact,” 2021, Layered laser cut dye sublimation prints on aluminum (Edition of 3 + 2 APs), 32 x 24 inches.